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MYTHOLOGY IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S *THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA*: A STUDY

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Abstract:

This paper analyses Amish Tripathi's The Immortals of Meluha in relation to mythology. Amish Tripathi has constructed his three novels, The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of Nagas and The Oath of Vayuputras on the radical thought that all gods were once humans who lived in the ancient times Because of their adventures, intellectual achievements, their love for their fellow humans and their concern for the protection of their tribes, they were elevated to the level of divine beings. This is the basic concept of Amish Tripathi's Shiva trilogy and he has combined this concept with Hindu mythology in which there are trinity gods such as Brahma, Lord of creation, Vishnu, Lord of protection and Shiva, Lord of destruction. Of them, the author has chosen to depict the awe inspiring greatness of Lord Shiva. The characters that appear, apart from Shiva, also bear close resemblance to mythological characters. The author has presented two ancient kingdoms in this work Meluhan and Swadweep Empires which fight between themselves frequently. Neelkanth is portrayed to be on the side of the Meluhans who are called Suryavanshis. He brings victory to them by vanquishing the Chandravanshis.

***Key Words**: War, Dance, Victory, Treachery, Cunningness, Sin, Defeat.*

Amish Tripathi is a contemporary Indian novelist who was born on 18th October 1974 in Mumbai, India. His upbringing in the religious household evoked his enthusiasm in Hindu religion particularly in Lord Shiva. He started his career as a banker but soon he quit the job to chase his passion for writing novels. His Shiva trilogy includes *TheImmortals* of *Meluha*, followed by *TheSecret* of *Nagas* and then *The Oath of Vayuputras*. The story starts in the first novel and it continues in the second and concludes in the third novel. This article has taken up only the first novel for its analysis.

There are two ancient kingdoms portrayed in this novel one Meluha whose subjects are known as Suryavanshis and the other one Swadweep whose citizens are called Chandravanshis. Regarding the physical location of Meluha, it is depicted to have spread from the entire country of present Pakistan up to Haryana including Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. The empire of Swadweep covered the provinces of Uttarkand, Bihar, Jarkand, West Bengal, Sikkim Assam, Megalaya and the entire country of Bangladesh. In comparison with both kingdoms, Meluha appears to be far more advanced than the Swadweepans in many respects such as education, science and technology, healthcare, culture, civilization and so on. The Chandravanshis are lagging behind. Both the empires have been at war with each other for many decades. To make matters worse, Chandravanshis join hands with Nagas who are cursed race of people with physical deformities but with exceptional skills in warfare. The province they live in is known as Dandaka forest which is portrayed to be located in the parts of Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The emperor of Suryavanshis, Daksha feels fed up with war with Chandravanshis. He feels that the wars that are fought on very high scale and on frequent basis have inflicted much agony on the lives of Meluhans. He wishes to put an end to the armed struggle with Chandravanshis who are brutal, cruel barbaric and violent by nature. Suryavanshis are diametrically opposed to them and they want to control the pugnacious and belligerent Chandravanshis and live in peace. In order to create peace in the country,

Daksha, the emperor of Meluha sends his emissaries to the region of Tibet to find a valiant warrior who would defeat the Chandravanshis and provide protection and peace for Meluha.

Nandi is an emissary sent by Daksha to the region of Tibet. What is worth mentioning here is in the Hindu mythology Daksha is the father of Parvathi, Shiva's wife. Nandi meets Shiva, the chieftain of Guna tribe and invites him to Meluha where he promises Shiva and his tribe can live not only in peace but also with much prosperity. Shiva who has to take on the belligerent tribe Pakratis to safeguard his people heeds Nandi's words. Pakratis are intent on encroaching upon the Shore of Manasarovar Lake where the Guna tribe lives. Both the tribes enter into violent confrontation frequently and it causes loss of lives on a large scale. Shiva's heart longs for relief from this sort of meaningless violence with Pakratis. He consults with his friend Badra and his other tribal people .That Shiva wants to be democratic though he has got full powers to take decisions on any issue is the reflection of his democratic nature. They leave for Meluha and on the way also they happen to encounter a fierce attack from Pakratis but later they were chased away.

Mountkailash is the abode of Lord Shiva. In this novel, the protagonist is depicted to have hailed from that region only. The novel is full of references to mythological characters and themes as well. When the Guna tribe arrives at Kashmir they are treated by the lady doctor Ayurvati whose name alludes to the branch of medicine in ancient India. When she gives them some drink, it affects all except Shiva whose throat turns blue which leads her to reach the conclusion he is none other than Neelkanth whom the entire empire of Meluha believes to be their saviour and for whose arrival they waited so long. The matter is brought to the knowledge of Chenardhwaj, the governor of Kashmir. He feels so elated that god has blessed him with his appearance in his state. He is instructed to send Neelkanth to Devagiri the capital city of Meluha along with Nandi and three bodyguards, with the instructions that Shiva himself should not be told about Neelkanth issue until Daksha confirms it. When Ayurvati, Nandi and all other Kashmir officials treat him with so much of reverence, it not only confuses Shiva but also embarrasses him.

Crossing many rivers Shiva reaches Devagiri where the king Daksha receives him with deep veneration and reverence. There he happens to meet an elegant girl in Brahma temple practicing dance with her friend. He falls in love with her at first sight and saves her from Nagas attack as well. Later, Shiva gains knowledge about her identity. She is none other than the daughter of Daksha but he also knows she is a Vikarma. Meluhans consider the differently abled persons as vikarmas. Besides the people with physical and mental defects, the women who have lost their husbands and given birth to stillborn babies are also condemned as Vikarmas.

Sati is a Vikarma who lost her husband and who gave birth to a still born child. In Meluhan tradition Vikarmas are not allowed to be part of mainstream society. They are treated as outcasts by not being permitted to take part in functions, festivals and social gatherings. They are regarded as carriers of bad fate. Shiva, who is impressed greatly by the sophisticated life of Meluhans, is unable to accept the adoption of vikarma practice. He thinks that this is not only unfair but totally unacceptable as well. He asks himself how people can be penalized for the sins they committed in their previous birth, when the question of the existence of the previous birth itself is uncertain. He requests Daksha to lift this inhuman practice of Vikarma. Daksha, unable to gainsay the words of Shiva, opines that women who belong to upper echelons of society and who remain as Vikarmas alone can be brought out of Vikarma confinement. But Shiva speaks for all. When Shiva, whom they consider to be their messiah, wants to enter into wedlock with the princess sati, it makes Daksha boundlessly joyful because of two important reasons one protection of the country from Chandravanshis, two relief for Sati.

One important point to be noted here is the majesty of Parvateshwar, Meluhan army chief who is not pleased with servile behavior of his emperor Daksha towards Shiva. He thinks that Meluhan army is strong enough to take on the might of Chandravanshis and Nagas. He also holds that drawing strength from external forces and depending on them for the protection of the country would be the reflection of their weakness. In addition, when Daksha wishes to remove Vikarma practice, it saddens him and many

questions like how law can be amended for the sake of individuals arise in his mind. On knowing that amendment of Vikarma law applies to all regardless of social layers, he becomes relieved. He may have difference with Daksha but he does nothing at all in violation of Daksha's order. The extent of his loyalty towards the royal family is remarkable but unlike them he gives only due respect to Shiva.

Like Parvateshwar, Brahaspati the chief Meluhan scientist who produces the drink of somras in mount mandar on a great scale also treats Shiva like an equal. Shiva who has been elevated to the position of protector of Meluhans is shown overwhelming reverence and veneration in all places, which causes much embarrassment to him. When he meets Brahaspati who treats him like a friend, Shiva becomes elated. Brahaspati also endorses the view of Parvateshwar that the empire of Meluha should be protected by Meluhans only. To assign this responsibility to some foreigner is unacceptable to him. In his private conversation with Shiva, he tells what legend says is Neelakanth would not come from Saptasindhu and he would destroy evil. He further adds that Meluhans only conclude their enemies are the bad tempered evil Chandravanshis who will be wiped out by Neelkanth.

Brahaspati's outspokenness lures Shiva so much that he has accepted him as his friend. Since Brahaspati is in charge of production of somras, Shiva asks him why his throat alone turns blue while taking somras he replies that it is perhaps due to their long life in mountainous region. He approaches everything with a scientific bent of mind, which is illustrated by the following lines. "The air gets thinner as you go higher up the mountains continued Brahaspati. There is less oxygen in thinner air. That means your body was used to surviving with less oxygen and therefore the anti-oxidant in the somras may have had stronger effect on you" (P.141)

Brahaspati's intelligence and way of approach have endeared him to Shiva so much. Shiva with royal family pays a visit to Mount Mandar the venue of production of somras. Brahaspati explains the modalities of preparation and ingredients of it. On the way back home Nagas launch lethal assault on them with sole objective of killing others and abducting sati. Shiva out powered them and they were chased away. After that mount mander became under attack. People of Devagiri heard a high decibel explosion in mount mandar where they all rush to and find the complete destruction of the laboratory. The attackers launched the attack in such a way that it would look like an accident and not an assault. Shiva is shocked and grieved to find the badly injured dead body of his friend Brahaspati. Coming around the site, he is sharp enough to witness the evidence of leather bracelet. Daksha with the support of Shiva announces war against Chandravanshis who Meluhans think are responsible for the attack. Nagas, it becomes obvious, abetted them. A fierce battle takes place between Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis at the end of which the former emerge triumphant with the great help of lord Shiva. After that Dilipa, Chandravanshis emperor is forced to surrender Anandamayi his daughter as hostage.

When Shiva enters Chandravanshis kingdom, to his shock he comes to know they also long for the arrival of their messiah, Neelkanth. Shiva undergoes so much of pain while looking at the pitiable lifestyle of Chandravanshis. He pays a visit to Ram Mandir where the Pandit enlightens him by saying that his karma operates Shiva and he will have to continue to fight against evil. Shiva gains some composure and realization as well. Coming out of the temple, he sees Sati standing here. At that point, a Naga from behind the tree attempts to attack Sati which is thwarted by Shiva. It marks the end of the first novel.

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